

2006 LAW ENFORCEMENT MEMORIAL CEREMONY

Guest Speaker U.S. Attorney Tom Colantuono

May 19, 2006



Director Lohmann, thank you for that introduction. Governor Lynch, Attorney General Ayotte, Commissioner Flynn, family members, law enforcement officials, honored guests.

I want to thank Major Tim Acerno of the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, and Chief Tim Russell of the Henniker Police Department for inviting me to be the speaker here today. It is a great honor to represent the President and the Department of Justice at this Memorial Service.

I first want to praise the beautiful simplicity of this memorial and its location in a place of prominence here at our State House Complex. I recall as a Senator supporting the placement of the memorial here when others wanted to place it at different locations away from the State House that would not have given it the prominence it deserves.

This memorial belongs right at our seat of government where our elected leaders, State House visitors, and the general public can see it every day as they go about their business.

I also want to praise the decision to have a yearly celebration each May because it helps all of us remember the importance of paying tribute to our fallen heroes from the law enforcement community. The families of these fallen officers deserve nothing less. And I want to thank everyone who has been involved in researching and assembling the Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Booklet, with pictures and brief biographical sketches of those represented on this memorial. A lot of hard work has gone into this project. There are currently 40 officers whose stories are told, from the very first known law enforcement officer in New Hampshire to die in the line of duty, Strafford County Deputy Sheriff Charles E. Smith, who was killed by a horse thief 115 years ago next Tuesday, to the most recent two officers and two troopers who lost their lives in 1997. Reviewing the booklet brought back memories of several I knew personally, including Derry Police Sergeant Tom Kelly, who died in 1989, and Auburn Police Lieutenant and prosecutor, Don Eaton, who was one of those who died in 1997. And it brought back some sad memories of speaking with Commissioner Flynn that day in 1994 when he got the news that Trooper James Noyes had been shot, and how there was a palpable feeling of grief and despair throughout the entire Safety building. You can't read the booklet without reliving those horrible days in 1997 when the entire State was shocked by the tragic incident in Colebrook where Troopers Leslie Lord and Scott Phillips lost their lives, and the equally tragic murder of Epsom Police Officer Jeremy Charron. It is important that we continue the tradition of yearly remembrances to keep the memories alive and to let the families of these brave men know that

we appreciate their sacrifice and that we will always stand with them.

The case of Deputy Charles Smith is quite interesting. We are grateful to Deputy Sheriff James Rowes, Sr. for researching and publishing an excellent historical piece about this case in the most recent addition of Knight Stick Magazine published by the New Hampshire Police Association. Deputy Smith was leading a posse on the trail of a horse thief, Julius McArthur, from Maine, when McArthur shot deputy Smith in Center Strafford on May 6, 1891. Deputy Smith died from his wounds, from a case of gangrene, seventeen days later, on May 23. Today, with modern medical care, he likely would have survived. McArthur meanwhile was taken to the County Jail, but he escaped on July 17, 1891 and was never captured to face justice for his despicable crime. So this case reminds us of the importance of our correctional officers in our criminal justice system, and we thank them for their presence here every year.

In addition to this being a time to remember, it is also a time to remind all of us to keep these officers and their families in our prayers, praying for their safety, praying for their speedy and full recovery if they are ever injured, and praying for consolation for their families and friends if they are ever called to make the ultimate sacrifice. Just like the military and just like our other first responders who willingly and bravely go into harm's way to protect all of us, police officers are true heroes who deserve all our respect and support. What a special person it takes to put on the uniform and badge and equipment to go out and face danger every day. The scripture says that there is no greater love than this, that a person would lay down his life for his fellow man. These officers represented on this memorial exemplify that passage. They have brought great honor to themselves, their families, their departments, and to the entire law enforcement community. Those of us who benefit from the protections afforded to us by our law enforcement officers cannot thank you enough. Without your efforts, society would dissolve into chaos and anarchy. You, the thin blue line, are our protectors from harm, our saviors in times of disasters, and our keepers of the peace. And now, you face an even greater challenge, the threat of terrorism from an enemy who doesn't discriminate between military or civilian, an enemy who wants simply to kill us all and destroy our way of life. Times have never been as challenging for law enforcement. Times have never been as dangerous for law enforcement. But the respect that the public has for law enforcement has also never been greater.

So, when one of you falls in the line of duty, we will all stand with your families and the entire Law Enforcement Community to honor, praise, thank and show gratitude for your sacrifice, and we will do everything we can to support your families to carry on your legacy of greatness. May God bless you and our great country.